



**Town of Amherst
Special Town Council Meeting – Public Forum to Address the Master Plan
Monday, October 28, 2019
6:00 p.m.
Town Room, Town Hall
4 Boltwood Avenue**

Minutes

Complete video is available online beginning at 57:30: <https://amherstmedia.org/content/amherst-town-council-master-plan-102819>

1. Call to order and declaration of a quorum

President Griesemer declared the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Members present: Councilors Bahl-Milne, Brewer, De Angelis, DuMont, Griesemer, Hanneke, Pam, Ross, Ryan, Schoen, Schreiber, Steinberg, Swartz.

Councilors absent: Councilor Swartz.

Councilors participating remotely: None

Others present: Assistant Town Manager David Ziomek, Planning Director Christine Brestrup, Clerk of the Council Athena O’Keeffe.

President Griesemer announced audio and video recording by Amherst Media.

2. Announcements

3. Public Forum to Address the Master Plan [Charter Sec. 2.13]

Call to order Public Forum to Address the Master Plan 6:05 p.m.

Councilor Bahl-Milne asked about a list of what has and has not been accomplished according to the Master Plan, and about percentages of land use.

C. Brestrup responded that the numbers are out of date. Commercial can mean a number of different things, and has a property been developed to its fullest extent. If land area is limited, it can be build up.

Councilor Brewer commented that she worked on the master plan from 2000-2006, that this Town Council does not see the master plan with one lens or viewpoint, and asked that Planning staff and the Planning Board work with the full Council with the upcoming census data.

Councilor DuMont asked that public comments received in writing be included in the online packet.

Public comments:

Andy Churchill, Amherst resident and Chair of the Charter Commission, stated that this was approved in 2010, and asked how the town has changed.

C. Brestrup responded that the town has changed in terms of development, especially in the downtown. Our demographics have changed, older population, fewer school children. Economics are much better than they were in the mid 2000s.

D. Ziomek added that there is a realization that we have protected a lot of land for agriculture and open space, transition to more of a management and enhancement mode. Recognizing that Amherst has an affordable housing crisis, and the need to address that. Climate change is much bigger now than it was in 2010.

Dick Bentley of 24 North Prospect commented about design development and aesthetics, in terms of a recent decision by the Planning Board to approve a project that the Design Review Board (DRB) voted against.

Janet Keller of North Amherst commented about her experience in planning and environmental planning and energy planning in Rhode Island, and commented about the authority of the DRB, suggesting that it be expanded, and continue emphasis with reuse of developed sites, to take the pressure off Greenfield. Expressed hope that historic properties can be reused and adapted. Hope to see Amherst adopt the new Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissioners recommendations and bylaws for buffer zones in areas along rivers and streams. Suggested stepping back building height to make the front of a building shorter than the back.

C. Brestrup responded that the DRB is advisory to the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals, and recommendations are not binding, but the Planning and Zoning Boards do take design into consideration.

Elisa Campbell of 27 Pine Grove, commented that general goals can be in conflict and that is a very important part. Useful for those who are not builders to have an understanding of law about what the town can and cannot do within the law and what developers can and cannot do. Information about building costs is also important. Basic information about affordable housing would be illuminating.

Sarah Marshall of 64 Eames Avenue asked if the Universities' properties are included in the Master Plan, and suggested a map or GIS layer that shows affordable housing, on the Town's website.

C. Brestrup responded that most of the land owned by the universities is zoned ED, educational zone, with no regulations. The town cannot tell the university what they can and cannot do. In terms of maps on the website, if people think that would be useful we could probably provide that.

Bruce Coldham of District one in North Amherst, and a member of the comprehensive planning committee in 1997, commented about parking in the downtown, and suggested a fund that developers would be required to pay into which could be used to create additional parking.

Carol Lewis of 21 Ward Street commented that parking is not separable from everything else; if we can to encourage alternate modes of transportation we should not build parking lots.

Julian, a young Amherst resident, commented about staffing at the Fire Department, Kendrick Park zoning regulations, suggested a mandate on developers to provide 20% affordable housing, and efforts to beautify the downtown by the Department of Public Works and the Business Improvement District.

Carol Lewis, an Amherst resident, commented that there is an affordable housing gap, and suggested in-fill housing such as tiny homes.

Bruce Coldham of North Pleasant Street spoke about Burlington and the pedestrian-only zones there, and that cars are getting a bigger chunk than they deserve.

Kitty Axelson-Berry, an Amherst resident, commented that the Master Plan refers to existing neighborhood, and changing the nature of the existing neighborhood.

Maurianne Adams of 14 Beston Street commented about the different styles and cultures on North Pleasant and East Pleasant Streets, and the need to come up with a plan that represents the integrity of the Town on a small scale, or that gets lost. Suggested that Planning and Zoning decisions include votes of the DRB.

Mary Sayer of District 1 commented about Mitchell Farm in North Amherst, and the lack of welcome signage at 1 East Pleasant Street.

President Griesemer stated that comments regarding the Master Plan may be sent to towncouncil@amherstma.gov, and that this is the beginning of the conversation about the Master Plan and the dialogue will continue.

4. Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the President 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting

None.

5. Adjourn

MOTION: Councilor Hanneke moved, second by Councilor Pam, to adjourn.

VOTED unanimously to adjourn at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Athena O'Keefe
Clerk of the Council

Record of Agenda Packet Materials and Documents Presented

10-28-2019 FINAL Town Council Agenda - Primer on the Master Plan

10-28-2019 FINAL Town Council Agenda - Public Forum to Address the Master Plan

Master Plan - All Chapters combined (excludes appendix)

Master Plan Feedback - Cunningham

Preliminary Master Plan Comments - Keller

Presentation on Master Plan 10-28-19 Short Version

Presentation to TC on Master Plan 10-28-19 (2)

Thoughts on Master Plan - Gage